

PROTECTING DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES WHILE PROMOTING STORMWATER INFILTRATION

“An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure”

If you are promoting infiltration through low impact development (LID) stormwater management practices and green infrastructure (GI) construction, don't forget to protect drinking water sources in the process. Only through careful coordination and planning, can we protect the quality of both surface water bodies and drinking water sources.

“Know the Ropes” - Stormwater can contain a wide variety of contaminants and under specific circumstances, stormwater infiltration practices are identified as potential sources of drinking water contamination. States may prohibit or restrict proposed infiltration methods based on their proximity to drinking water supplies. Local ordinances may also place more stringent standards on the practice and require further coordination with the local water supplier, conservation commission, or planning board. More than one set of regulations apply and they vary by state.

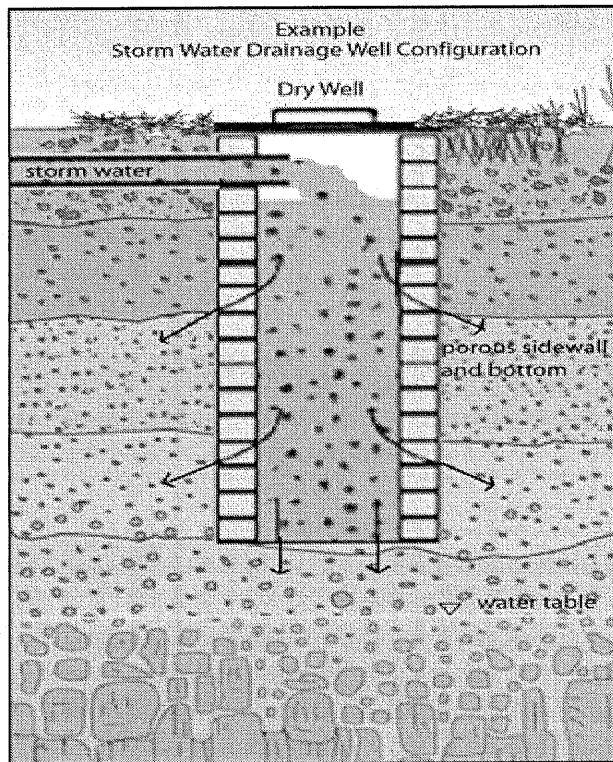
“Don't Put the Cart Before the Horse”- Before promoting stormwater infiltration for a specific project, determine if the infiltration practice is: 1) within or near a public drinking water source protection area, 2) near a private well, or 3) is introducing unsafe levels of contaminants to the groundwater. “Unsafe levels” are defined by the state; however, a contaminant regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) generally cannot be infiltrated at a concentration greater than its maximum contaminant level (MCL) or at a concentration that would endanger a drinking water source. State regulations define minimum setback distances from public ground and surface water drinking water supplies, private wells, and septic systems, etc. In some cases, infiltration may be allowed only with appropriate pretreatment.

“Finding Your Feet”- Review state and local regulations to determine if the proposed stormwater infiltration practices are allowed, prohibited, or restricted due to the proximity to a drinking water source. Listed below are some examples of stormwater management practices:

- Rain gardens and bioretention areas, vegetated swales, permeable pavement, green roofs, infiltration planters, trees and boxes, and rainwater harvesting for non-potable uses such as toilet flushing and landscape irrigation (downspout discharging above or below ground).
- Infiltration trenches and basins that do not have distribution system lines collecting and discharging runoff to a storm drain network or surface water outfall.
- Commercially manufactured stormwater infiltration device including pre-cast or pre-built proprietary subsurface detention vaults, chambers or other devices designed to capture and infiltrate stormwater run-off.

- Drywells, leaching catch basins, French drains, seepage pits, and improved sinkholes.

Additional Regulations: The Safe Drinking Water Act regulates some stormwater infiltration practices through the Underground Injection Control (UIC) Class V Well Program. All infiltration practices classified as UIC Class V wells must be registered with the state. As a general rule, if the infiltration practice involves a well, dug hole, seepage pit, infiltration basin, etc. that is deeper than its widest surface dimension OR has a piping system that collects/distributes and discharges fluids to the subsurface, it is a Class V well.



Example:

Stormwater infiltration practice that is also a UIC Class V well.

“Better Safe Than Sorry!” - If you have questions about this factsheet, please call Denise Springborg, Drinking Water Quality & Protection Unit, (617) 918-1681 or your state contact.

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